



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420**

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UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

DISCLOSING ADVERSE EVENTS TO PATIENTS

1. This letter provides clinicians and managers with information about disclosing adverse events to patients in Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities.
2. While routine disclosure of adverse events to patients has been VHA's national policy since 1995, the ethical and legal reasons behind this policy are not always understood, and there are unanswered questions about how the policy should be implemented. A new report by VHA's National Ethics Committee, Disclosing Adverse Events to Patients, helps to clarify this issue, providing practical guidance regarding what adverse events should be disclosed, by whom, when, and how.
3. To ensure a consistent approach to disclosure of adverse events throughout the VHA system, facilities are encouraged to review this report and incorporate its recommendations into policies and procedures where appropriate. The report is available from the National Center for Ethics in Health Care at: http://vaww.va.gov/vhaethics/resources_4.cfm.
4. Questions about the report may be directed to Ellen Fox, MD (10E), Director, National Center for Ethics in Health Care, (202) 501-0364.

S/ Louise Van Diepen for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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